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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0870

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3808

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1626

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1493

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2062

RHMFIAA/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1418

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2552

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000668

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: HUMAN RIGHTS NON-PAPER DELIVERED

REF: STATE 53968

Classified By: CDA RICHARD E. HOAGLAND: 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (SBU) As instructed reftel, Charge delivered on May 27 to Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov the English original and Russian translation of the non-paper, "Steps for Further Democratic Reform and Human Rights Protection," noting SCA Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher could be expected to discuss it with President Berdimuhamedov on May 28. As he often does, Meredov launched into a long monologue of the steps Turkmenistan, under the new president, has already taken, emphasizing the work of the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDHR). He said, "Shirin (Akhmedova, the director) is working around the clock, and I am fully with her on this." Charge acknowledged the important work being done, but emphasized for the bilateral relationship to grow there must be concrete steps forward in all areas, including human rights. Meredov took the point.

¶2. (SBU) Meredov, who had already seen the paper -- DCM delivered it to MFA Americas Director Serdar Bashimov on May 23 -- assured Charge he would discuss every element of the paper with President Berdimuhamedov, but he said he preferred not to pass it through the Presidential Apparat. Meredov added, "I want to reassure you again how important this is to the president. We are working hard to meet our international obligations in ways that are appropriate for our traditions and customs. You must understand the President can move only at a certain pace. But I assure you we will get to the goal, step by step."

¶3. (SBU) Charge also passed to Meredov a copy of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) May 23 letter to President Berdimuhamedov. Meredov read the letter carefully and said, "So they want to visit. OK, let's see. It's hard to say." He recalled he had last met with HRW in Turkmenistan in 1998 when he was Deputy Director of the President's National Human Rights Institute, which Berdimuhamedov has now re-empowered as IDHR. Charge urged Meredov to consider seriously the possibility of such a visit, noting that it would have significant U.S. domestic political value. Meredov said he understood and would give the request serious consideration.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: We take Meredov at his word he will discuss

the entire paper with President Berdimuhamedov. But we are intrigued he did not want to pass it through official channels, causing us to wonder if he might need to work around a roadblock there. Or, perhaps, he simply wants the opportunity to put his own spin on it. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND